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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

19 January 1954

MEMORANDUM FOR THE BOARD

SUBJECT: Probable Communist Reaction to Release of POW's (Notes for DCI Briefing of the NSC)

1. In our opinion, the Chinese Communists do not regard the disposition of the POW's as a matter of major substance comparable to the continuation of the armistice in Korea. This was demonstrated when they reluctantly accepted the principle of non-forcible repatriation during the armistice negotiations. It was also demonstrated when they acquiesced in the ROK release of 27,000 prisoners in mid-June prior to signing the armistice. On both occasions the Chinese Communists protested and argued at length, but finally, after laying down a smoke-screen to conceal the fact they had lost, they accepted the UN position.

2. Recent Communist behavior indicates that the Communists wish to retain the status quo in Korea and not resume hostilities. Also, present Communist plans for rehabilitating North Korea point to a long-range continuation of the present status quo in Korea. We consider that recent Communist tactics in relation to the POW's have been designed largely to exert pressure on the Indians and to conceal the prestige losses they suffered on the POW issue.

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3. We therefore estimate that the Chinese Communists will not resort to armed force to forestall the release of the prisoners or take any other action which would involve any considerable risk that hostilities will resume in Korea. We believe that when the Indians turn custody of the POW's over to the two commands, the Communists will probably proclaim that the UNC, and possibly the Indians, were guilty of breaking the armistice agreement. At the time, also, Communist agents among the anti-Communist prisoners may create disturbances in an effort to give substance to the Communist contention that members of pro-Communist prisoners have been forcibly retained. In subsequent actions, the Communists will probably bring pressure to bear on the Indians to raise the POW issue in the anticipated special session of the UN.

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